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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 001617

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG AND AF/C
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS: SELECTING A LEADER, MILITARY
PLANS, AND CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION

REF: A. KHARTOUM 01558

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 01593

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 2, UFDD-F leader Abdoulwahid Aboud Makaye told poloffs that Chadian rebel leadership meeting in Khartoum will soon choose a leader by consensus, random selection, or a complicated multi-staged election. According to Aboud, the Chadian opposition does not fear the Government of Chad's new air assets, nor its increased military deployment in Eastern Chad. Aboud boasted of his own movement's force ("the second strongest after UFCD") and the overall strength of the opposition, which is light, mobile, and "able to hold areas of Eastern Chad for up to two months." Like Tollimi (reftel), Aboud sought the intervention of the international community (especially the U.S.) but feared it might come too late and only when the movements would have besieged N'Djamena. END SUMMARY.

DESPERATE MEASURES: A UNIQUE, REVOLVING ELECTORAL SYSTEM

[1](#)2. (C) Aboud confirmed Tollimi's reports of Chadian rebel unification efforts (reftel) in Khartoum, and reported the movements have agreed on a common political and military platform that will culminate in a written manifesto. He admitted the difficulty of choosing a leader, but said Chadian opposition was focusing on forming the structure of the political alliance consisting of a president, a first and a second vice-president, the parliament and 32 ministers. He was optimistic that this could be done in the next two weeks. On the question of choosing a leader, Aboud foresaw three options: 1) Choice by consensus, something that was "unlikely" in his opinion; 2) Election by a complicated, multi-staged, *secret* ballot; 3) Random drawing. (Aboud admitted this final choice was unpopular with the movements, but that it could be a last resort if the first two options fail.)

[1](#)3. (C) Aboud described the second option, the electoral system, in much of its complexity and detail. Each of the five Chadian rebel movements would provide three representatives to participate in the election for a total of fifteen representatives. However, the fifteen representatives would only be allowed to vote for four out of five leaders at a time to compel them to vote for someone other than their own leader. The voting would occur for five consecutive rounds with different candidates in each election. (Note: Aboud did not specify exactly how candidates would be nominated, what would occur in the chance of a tie, or the exact specifications of this unique system. End Note.)

Aboud said that although all rebel leaders have not agreed to this system, they are moving towards agreement on this structure, should they need to use it.

ANOTHER VOICE OF SUPPORT FOR TOLLIMI

14. (C) When asked which individual he would support for the leadership of the Chadian opposition, Aboud broke out into an uncontrolled laugh. (Comment: It was not clear whether Aboud was struck by poloffs directness, or whether he found the question amusing, as he obviously considers himself the best leader for the rebels. End Comment.) When the question was rephrased ("What leader would you support other than yourself,") Aboud recovered and said that many rebels look to Nouri as their leader, as Nouri is the eldest in the group "and in Africa it is natural for the oldest person to be regarded as the natural leader." Despite Nouri's traditional appeal, Aboud personally would support Abaker Tollimi because he believes that: 1) Nouri is not appropriate given his ties to Hissene Habre, (reftel.) 2) Nouri lacks the personal leadership and charisma necessary to unite the rebels. 3) Tollimi would be an acceptable leader to the other movements.

Aboud mused that since Tollimi serves Nouri, the only way that Tollimi would be able to take leadership of the Chadian rebels, is if Nouri removed himself as a candidate and endorsed his subordinate Tollimi. With respect to other candidates, Aboud repeated Tollimi's analysis (reftel) on why Erdimi and Adouma Hassaballah would be unsuitable leaders. Although Hassaballah controls the largest military force, he suffers from high blood pressure, diabetes, and is not a powerful leader, stated Aboud. Contrary to Tollimi's predictions, Aboud made no mention of Fidel Moungar or

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Ngarlegy Yorongar (reftel), though he did stress the need to include exiled opposition leaders in an inclusive dialogue.

UNITED OR NOT, NEGOTIATIONS ARE THE KEY TO A DEMOCRATIC CHAD

15. (C) Aboud stated that even without unification, negotiations with the GoC are possible if the international community agrees to oversee the process. He asserted that the lack of unification would not undermine such negotiations as the process should include Chadian reconciliation efforts to include political opposition leaders and civil society. He called on, in particular, the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and the U.S. to lead the mediation. He insisted on a multi-lateral effort so as to avoid a repeat of the Sirte Agreement, where the AU, instead of mediating, simply facilitated a meeting with Deby and left them at the mercy of the Libyans. "We are not just after money," he quipped. He claimed the AU alone would not get involved as it has been reticent to engage seriously in mediating this conflict. He said he personally had met the AU's representative in Khartoum to encourage AU mediation and that the Chadian opposition is still waiting for a response to a letter they sent to the AU urging its involvement (Note: Aboud did not elaborate when asked when the letter was sent. Poloffs have previously requested a copy of this letter from Chadian opposition representatives on multiple occasions, a request the latter were unable to fulfill. End note.)

16. (C) As to the future of Chad, Aboud emphasized that the Chadian opposition believes in the democratic transformation of Chad. He explained that negotiations should clearly outline the terms of a government of national unity during the transition period and the movements should let Deby finish his mandate. He believed an agreement must guarantee the vice presidency to the military opposition (i.e. the Chadian rebels). He elaborated the latter would have the mandate to form a real Chadian National Army. He also believed an agreement must include a clause forbidding Deby from contesting the next presidential elections.

MILITARY OPTION STILL A POSSIBILITY

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¶17. (C) Asked if the movements fear Deby's military build-up in Eastern Chad, a confident Aboud replied they were not worried and further asserted that "they could still take N'Djamena." He claimed they are not scared of Deby's new military acquisitions, which included tanks and new air assets (specifically noting 11 helicopters and 2 F-111 airplanes positioned.) Aboud confirmed that some rebel movements would like to attack and hold Eastern Chad, rather than drive all the way to N'Djamena. Aboud accepted that the Chadian rebels cannot hold land indefinitely ("one or two months at the most,") but thought that this would be enough time to force the government to the negotiating table. Aboud did acknowledge, however, that holding land any longer than this would be difficult for the movements. He stated that the rebels' strength lies in their speed, mobility, and unpredictability. He stressed they preferred negotiations, but are afraid it would take them staging an attack all the way to the presidential palace in N'Djamena for the international community to take them seriously.

FRANCE IS PART OF THE PROBLEM
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¶18. (C) Aboud lamented France's meddling in African internal affairs, in particular the paternalistic relationship it maintains with its former colonies. He said he understood it to be the vestige of colonization, but deplores that France seems to have a relationship not with the state, but with just the head of state. He commented France was better placed than any other nation to exert pressure on Deby, as it can leverage its military cooperation with the GoC to encourage Deby to engage with the opposition. Instead, Aboud said France uses it to help Deby and provide the government with intelligence on the whereabouts of the movements. He accused France of adopting a self-serving stance as the current status quo allows France to continue to extract resources for its own benefit. He decried such a blatant abuse of power, and asked how France would react if the oppositions movements gain power and annul Franco-Chadian treaties. He encouraged the U.S. to become more involved in Chad to counter France's undue influence.

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COMMENT
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¶19. (C) Overall, Aboud appeared to be an intelligent, affable, and engaging character (especially when compared to gruff and illogical characters such as UFCD's Hasaballah.) Although we have only heard it from our last three contacts with the Chadian opposition, it is remarkable that all three named Abaker Tollimi as their choice for the Chadian opposition's leadership (both the Dutch and French Ambassadors have recently speculated to us that Aboud himself could be the Khartoum regime's choice as he seems the "most stable and trustworthy" choice for the ruling NCP). Whether Tollimi will gain the support of his own leader, Nouri, or whether the strange systems for selecting a leader will actually result in his leadership remains to be seen. Our conversation with Aboud led us to the conclusion that the Chadian rebels are desperate for a leader (even considering selecting a leader out of a hat,) deeply divided (to the extent that they invented an elaborate and incomprehensible voting system,) and very anxious for international engagement. Given that the Sudanese government may be pressing the Chadian rebels not to mount attacks into Chad over the next few months, the Chadian rebels should have plenty of time to resolve their leadership issues, if they are able.
FERNANDEZ